Debate with Grand Ayatollah Montazeri Part 2

MUHAMMAD'S WARS

Question no. 2

How could someone calling himself a messenger of God raid merchant caravans and act like a common hoodlum and a highway robber?

Ayatollah Montazeri

As for the raids at the merchant caravans of the Quraish this caravan comprehended several wealthy Meccan enemies of Islam and was accompanied by Abu Sofyan the renowned arch enemy of Islam and the Muslims. In that year the hostilities of the Quraish and their instigations against Islam and the Muslims had intensified. Medina had just become the political and governmental center for the Muslims and it was under the attack of its Quraish enemies from every directions.

Many Muslims were forced to abandon their homes due to the Quraish persecution and had emigrated to Medina These people wanted to retaliate and reclaim their properties from the Quraish. They had been informed that this caravan carried a lot of wealth. The leadership of the Muslims was also planning to render the highways that were purveying economically and militarily the enemy, unsafe. The main objective of this sudden attack was to render insecure the arteries so that the enemy is weakened in their war against the Muslims. These wars continued until Mecca was conquered.

Obviously when two countries or two forces are in war, and while there are no peace treaties between them, each side is justified to debilitate the economical and the military strength of the opposing party and threaten their security.

This was, and still is, an accepted practice in the world. Highway robbery however is something completely different. A highway robber is a thug and a hoodlum that endangers the lives and the safety of the people that live peacefully in their own city or country without showing enmity to others and steals their property.

Sina

Dear Ayatollah Ozma Montazeri,

To begin on this subject I would like to thank you for being truthful and unlike most of the Muslims who claim all the wars of the Prophet were defensive you acknowledge that he was actually the aggressor and it was he who raided merchant caravans. This saves a lot of time

for both of us because I don't have to list his numerous attacks at those whom he considered to be his enemies.

However, you seem to justify his raids at merchant caravans, towns and his killing of the civilians because as you see them they were strategic military plans to weaken the position of the enemy. Muhammad's own explanation was that Muslims have the right to take back what the Quraish took away from them when they forced them to exile.

Notwithstanding, the truth is that Meccans did not drive the Muslims out of their homes. They emigrated on their own volition and because of Mohammad's insistence. At first he ordered his followers to immigrate to Abyssinia and then when he found enough disciples in Medina, he sent them thither.

The truth is that despite the fact that Muhammad constantly insulted the religion of the Quraish and infuriated them with his abrasive behavior there is not a single incidence of physical violence or persecution against him or his followers recorded in Islamic annals.

Muslims today would not tolerate any criticism against their religion. They would kill at once any person who dares to question their belief. This is what the prophet taught them to do. But Arabs prior to Muhammad were more tolerant. They used to live with the Jews and Christians in harmony without any sign of religious animosity between them. Yet the ultimate test of tolerance came when Muhammad started to taunt their gods. Despite that kind of libeling the Quraish evinced incredible degree of tolerance and although being offended, never harmed Muhammad or any of his cohorts.

Compare this to the treatment of the Baha'is in Iran. Baha'is do not insult Muhammad or his Allah, they do not reject the Imams nor disagree with any part of Quran. All they say is that their messenger is the Promised One of the Muslims. This is nothing compared to Muhammad's affronts of the beliefs of the people of Quraish. Nevertheless Muslims have not spared any act of atrocity against the Baha'is. They killed many of them, jailed them, tortured them, beat them, denied them of their human rights and treated them with utter inhumanity. None of that was done against Muhammad and his followers in Mecca even though he constantly accosted their gods with showers of taunts and would imprecate their sacred beliefs as if daring them to persecute.

When the Meccans had enough of it and could no more stand Muhammad's mocking of their deities, a body of their elders repaired to Abu Talib, the uncle of the Prophet and complained: - "*This Nephew of thine hath spoken opprobriously of our gods and our religion: and hath abused us as fools, and given out that our forefathers were all astray. Now, avenge us thyself of our adversary; or, (seeing that thou art in the same case with ourselves,) leave him to its that we may take our satisfaction*." Abu Talib spoke to them softly and assured them he would counsel his nephew to be more deferential. But Muhammad would not change his proceedings. So they went again to Abu Talib in great vexation; and warned him that if he would not restrain his nephew from his offensive conduct, they would have to restrain him themselves. They added thus: - "*and now verily we cannot have patience any longer with his*

abuse of us, our ancestors, and our gods. Wherefore either do thou hold him back from us, or thyself take part with him that the matter may be decided between us."

This is all that is recorded about the persecution of the Muslims in Mecca. The above is a warning but falls short of issuing a threat. In fact until Abu Talib was alive and even after his death until Muhammad stayed in Mecca no harm was inflicted upon him and nor any of his followers suffered persecution.

The only physical violence reported against a Muslim is the beating of Omar of his own sister who had embraced Islam, which led to his own acceptance. This however cannot be called a real religious persecution but a family violence as Omar was an irritable man with an unpredictable temper who would lose his composure easily and resort to violence. Yet even this hadith may not be true because in another Hadith narrated by Omar himself he describes his story of conversion to Islam differently.

So the question arises, if there were no persecution against the Muslims, who forced them out of their homes? We know that many of them abandoned Mecca and emigrated first to Abyssinia and then to Medina. Why would they leave their homes if they were not in danger?

The answer to this question can be found with Muhammad and what was going in his mind. It was he who asked them to leave. In fact he ordered them to leave making it a mandate from Allah. The Following verses clarify this perfectly.

> *"Lo! those who believed and left their homes and strove with their wealth and their lives for the cause of Allah, and those who took them in and helped them: these are protecting friends one of another. And those who believed but did not leave their homes, ye have no duty to protect them till they leave their homes; but if they seek help from you in the matter of religion then it is your duty to help (them) except against a folk between whom and you there is a treaty. Allah is Seer of what ye do."(*Q.8: 72*)*

These are very harsh words against his own followers who did not leave Mecca and stayed behind. In other part he presses further this point.

> *They long that ye should disbelieve even as they disbelieve, that ye may be upon a level (with them). So choose not friends from them till they forsake their homes in the way of Allah; if they turn back (to enmity) then take them and kill them wherever ye find them, and choose no friend nor helper from among them, (Q.4: 89)*

In the above verse Muhammad is ordering the believers of Mecca to forsake their homes and go to Medina. He goes as far as to instruct other Muslims to kill them if they decide to return home, which is consistent with the cultic nature of Islam. So as we can witness the exodus of the Muslims from Mecca was not due to any persecution by the idolaters. There was no such a persecution even though Muhammad exasperated the Quraish to their limit of forbearance with his triad of insults. The new converts left Mecca because Muhammad

asked them to. His pressure tactics was so intense that he even told them that they would go to hell if they stayed behind and did not emigrate.

> *Lo! as for those whom the angels take (in death) while they wrong themselves, (the angels) will ask: In what were ye engaged? They will say: We were oppressed in the land. (The angels) will say: Was not Allah's earth spacious that ye could have migrated therein? As for such, their habitation will be hell, an evil journey's end;(Q.4: 97)*

Muhammad had plans to conquer the Arabia and subdue Persia,

The inevitable question is however: “why?” Why would the Prophet force his followers to emigrate when they were not being persecuted in their own town? Why would he coerce them to leave their own homeland? This tactic was so unorthodox that even western historians and scholars of Islam like Sprenger and Sir William Muir have failed to see the plot that Muhammad was brewing in his mind from the very early days that he realized there are a few people who actually believed him to be the messenger of God.

Muir, in The Life of Mohammad, quotes Hishami:

> The Coreish, hearing that Abu Talib lay at the point of death, sent a deputation in order that some contact should be made to bind both parties, after his decease should have removed all restraint upon Mahomet. They proposed accordingly that they should retain their ancient faith, and that Mahomet should promise to refrain from abuse or interference; in which case they on their part would agree not to molest him in his faith. Abu Talib called Mahomet, and communicated to him the reasonable request. Mahomet replied -" Nay, but there is one word, which if ye concede, you will thereby conquer Arabia, and reduce Ajam under subjection." "Good!" said Abu Jahl, " not one such word, but ten." Mahomet replied,-" Then say,-There is no God but the Lord, and abandon that which ye worship beside him." And they clapped their hands in rage;-" Dost thou desire, indeed, that we should turn our gods into one God? That were a strange affair!" And they began to say one to another, "This fellow is obstinate and impracticable. Ye will not get from him any concession that ye desire. Return, and let us walk after the faith of our forefathers till God determine the matter betwixt us and him." So they arose and departed. Hishami, p.136.

From the above story we can establish several facts.

a) The Quraish were not persecuting the Muslims and the their leader but asking him to respect their beliefs.

b) Muhammad was adamant to continue his abrasive and opprobrious behavior towards the people of Mecca and their religion.

c) Muhammad was dreaming to conquer Arabia and “reduce Ajam under subjugation”.

As it becomes clear, the Prophet when yet in Mecca with no more than a handful of follower was already fantasizing to conquer Arabia and subdue Persia. Is it befitting for a messenger of God to indulge in reveries about “conquering” and “subduing”? One would expect that the one chosen by God to be the light for all mankind, have nobler thoughts of guiding, educating and liberating people, not conquering them and subduing them. These are not the thoughts of a messenger of God but of a conqueror and a vanquishing subjugator. These are the thoughts of authoritarian conquistadors like Changiz Khan, Napoleon, Hitler and even Saddam Hussein, but not of a Prophet of God who, should radiate with love, compassion and other spiritual qualities.

The Prophet was indeed a vivid case of megalomania. He was a manic/depressive par excellence. When he was high, he had these grandiose thoughts of conquering the world and when he was low he would indulge in thoughts of suicide.

Sahih Bukhari V. 9, Book 87, Number 111

“….the Divine Inspiration was also paused for a while and the Prophet became so sad as we have heard that he intended several times to throw himself from the tops of high mountains and every time he went up the top of a mountain in order to throw himself down, Gabriel would appear before him and say, "O Muhammad! You are indeed Allah's Apostle in truth" whereupon his heart would become quiet and he would calm down and would return home. And whenever the period of the coming of the inspiration used to become long, he would do as before, but when he used to reach the top of a mountain, Gabriel would appear before him and say to him what he had said before.

This change of mood gives us the clue that the Prophet was not a messenger of any god but a mentally sick, unstable manic/depressive man. His dreams of conquering and subduing were so intense, and they consumed his inner thoughts with such an ardor that they expunged the shades of right and wrong from his conscience. For him his dream of domination became his primary goal. And to achieve that goal he would stop at nothing. He lied compulsively and so convincingly that even he managed to fool himself. Although his earlier visions were the result of his hallucinations, when those hallucinations stopped he kept revealing spurious verses and perusing his dreams of grandeur with a remarkable obduracy distinctive only to mentally infirm. Megalomaniacs like Muhammad and Hitler often are charismatic people with a compelling personality that would mesmerize their audience with their speeches, their oomph, and confidence. Watching Hitler’s buoyant, upbeat, inspiring and motivating speeches with his air of confidence and self-assuredness that captivated the imagination of millions of his German listeners, perhaps can give us an insight into the mind of the Apostle of Allah and explain the mystery of his spell over his naïf and unsophisticated companions and devotees.

As he asserted in the deathbed of his uncle Abu Talib, Muhammad dreamed of conquering Arabia and subduing the mighty Persia even when his followers were but a handful of untrained and insignificant lot, with no means to fight or defend them selves. However he was not just a dreamer, but also someone who would follow up his dreams with extraordinary single mindedness and endurance. In his quest for personal grandeur he would sacrifice everything. He would kill those who would oppose him. He would slay those who would turn their backs to him. He would assassinate those who criticize him. He would wipe out the entire Jewish and Christian population from the Arabic Peninsula and execute one of the most ruthless genocides on the Jewish population of Medina and Kheibar. He would fabricate stories of jinns and angels and would fool his followers with tales of his visits to Heaven and Hell to manipulate his credulous and foolhardy believers. And he would invent an Allah, proclaim to be his messenger and the sole contact between him and thus demand total and unconditional submission to him through himself.

His dreams were of greatness and his plan was perfect. His timing was ideal and he had the best people to work with. Arabs of his time were superstitious, bigot, fanatical, ambitious, ruthless, barbarian, stubborn, chauvinist and above all gullible and a credulous crowd. Conquering Arabia and subduing Ajam for a man of his allure in that milieu was a synch.

But how would he realize his dream without an army? How would he convince his followers to take up their swords and use it against their own brothers, fathers and friends? He had to create the discontent. He had to cause enmity where there was none. He had to incite brother against brother and divide the people so they would willingly take arms and slay each other at his behest. Thus, on one hand he set on a campaign to imprecate the deities of the Quraish and taunt them constantly with his rude and boorish remarks to excite them and incite them to hostility who would in turn react and harass his followers and make them feel victimized and wronged. On the other hand he would force his followers to endure the hardship of exile, abandon their homes and flee to a foreign land. As a consequence he put one group against the other, and caused his followers to feel persecuted. Now they were poor, sore and suffered. Muhammad needed that anger and bitterness to foster his own dominance over them and command their obedience. In order to rule, he had to divide.

In order to rule ignorant people and make them side with you, you have to give them an enemy. Nothing can make people rally around you more than a common foe. This is the oldest trick in the book, which has been used successfully by all dictators throughout the history of mankind. Even Khomeini used that policy to strengthen his dominance over those gullible Iranians who believed in his lies.

Muhammad. As he boasted in Quran “Makaroo va makara Allah. va Allah khyrul makereen” was a master deceiver himself. He managed to create religious hate among people who despite their ignorance and bigotry never had evinced religious intolerance before. Now he had a group of supporters who were impoverished, discontent and angry. They were ready to fight for him and help him realize his dreams. Obedience to "God and his Apostle," became the watchword of Islam;-- And of course as usual Allah would reveal verses that give to his Apostle total authority.

*Whomsoever disobeyeth GOD AND HIS PROPHET; verily to him shall be the Fire of Hell; they shall be therein always, forever! (*Q.72: 23)

It is of interest to note that after enduring years of verbal abuse the Quraish boycotted Muhammad and his supporters from commercial transactions. They would not buy anything from them nor sell to them and would not marry anyone among them. They may even have threatened to punish him if he would not stop insulting their gods. Upon this Muhammad barricaded himself with the rest of his family members, the Hashemis, (excluding Abu Lahab) in a Quarter of Mecca known as She'b of Abu Talib. This self-imposed durance lasted about 3 years. During this time they would venture out only at the time of hajj and retreat once the pilgrimage was over. But in no time Quraish attacked that quarter. On the contrary they seemed quite pleased that Muhammad was not in the streets shouting obscenities at their deities. Had the Quraish intended to persecute Muslims or kill Muhammad, they had plenty of opportunities to do so. Yet they showed no hostility in the form of violence to any of the Muslims. Though it was much easier for them to wipe out Muhammad and his family than it was for him to exterminate the three Jewish tribes of Medina.

Nonetheless, the Quraish was ever suspicious of the Prophet and his movements, as they had heard that his followers were increasing in number in Medina. The tone of Muhammad's message was of doom and gloom and his actions towards the Meccans were perceptibly hostile. Therefore it was natural to be apprehensive of his moves and watch him carefully. Their suspicions picked when they learned that the Prophet had a clandestine rendezvous at midnight with a conclave of the Pilgrims from Medina in Acaba, at the outskirts of Mecca. Meccans were not at war with the people of Yathrib (Medina) but still the Medinans were foreigners. What the Prophet had to do with them? Why he was conspiring with outsiders and what was the purpose of his secret meeting with them in the middle of the night? We cannot blame the Quraish to be nervous and concerned for their own security as they saw that secret gathering an unwarrantable interference in the domestic affairs of their town.

This forced them to meet and confer with each other to gage the gravity of the situation. The outcome of that meeting is not clear, yet it caused Muhammad to fear for his life and flee the town with his friend Abu Bakr.

Muhammad later recalls that moment and conjectures that perhaps they were plotting to detain him, slay him or expel him. But there is no evidence to prove any of those charges and even he himself nor his All Knowing god seems to be sure as the real outcome of that meeting.

> "And call to mind when the unbelievers plotted against thee, that they might detain thee, or slay thee, or expel thee. Yea, they plotted; but God plotted likewise. And God is the best of plotters." (Q.8: 29)

In Medina

After Muhammad and Abu Bakr fled to Medina, their families stayed behind for several weeks. But nothing befell them and the Quraish did not harm, accost or harass them in anyways. Although as Muir points out “it was not unreasonable that they should have been detained as hostages against any hostile incursion from Medina. These facts lead us to doubt the intense hatred and bitter cruelty, which the strong colouring of tradition is ever ready to attribute to the Coreish In accordance with this view is the fact that the first aggressions, after the Hegira, were solely on the part of Mahomet and his followers. It was not until several of their caravans had been waylaid and plundered, and blood had thus been shed, that the people of Mecca were forced in self-defence to resort to arms”

The fact that Mohammad and Abu Bakr trusted that their families would be safe if left alone in Mecca is a clear indication that the hostilities attributed to the Quraish against the Muslims is an exaggeration and an excuse or a justification for their later invasion of Mecca. None of the Muslims were exiled. All of them were able to emigrate by their own volition. A few of them, were detained by their family members and a few who were slaves could not escape. The rest joined Muhammad with no obstruction from the Quraish.

When Muhammad reached Medina, there were about a couple of hundred of emigrants and perhaps an equal number of Medinans of the tribes of Khazraj and Aus who had believed in him. The Meccans were unskilled people and found employment in the fields and plantations. They mostly worked as laborers and journeymen for the wealthy Jews. It was hard on them. The belief in Allah was good but it would not feed them. Muhammad was aware that he could not keep his followers for long if he failed to satisfy their earthly needs. Moreover he had made them immigrate for a purpose: to wage war for him and establish his dominance over Arabia and subdue the Persia.

However his small cluster of followers was unqualified for military tasks. Yet he had offered those who left their homes a goodly home in this world and it was time to deliver his promise or face sedition and defection.

> *To those who leave their homes in the cause of Allah, after suffering oppression,- We will assuredly give a goodly home in this world; but truly the reward of the Hereafter will be greater. If they only realized (this)! (*Q.16: 41)

Whence would he provide them all the goodly things he offered them in this world? Certainly Allah would not be able to do it himself. That is when he had to put to action the plan that he had devised years earlier. Of course conquering Arabia and subduing the Ajam was not possible with just a few disciples but raiding the merchant caravans and plundering their goods was.

The Prophet turns a bandit.

So the Prophet turns a bandit and thenceforth he ceased to preach, "Speak good to men..." 2: 83 or "Be patient with what they say, and part from them courteously".73: 10 and

started to call for blood, “qateloo” (kill) became the buzzword of Allah’s subsequent messages.

During the first six months of Muhammad’s arrival to Medina, nothing important happened. The immigrants including Muhammad himself, had to struggle to make a living to pay for shelter and food.

However the thoughts of Mohammad were not thoughts of peace. He had plans, big plans. The number of his followers were increasing, some defecting from Mecca joining other immigrants and some accepting Islam in Medina. Now he was in a position to command a party of warriors. But the people of Medina had pledged only to defend the Prophet from attack, not to join him in any aggression against the Quraish.

So instead of attacking Mecca, in Dec. A.D. 622 In Ramadhan, seven months after his arrival, the prophet dispatched his uncle Hamza, at the head of thirty Refugees, to surprise a Meccan caravan returning from Syria under the guidance of Abul Hakam (Abu Jahl). This caravan, was guarded by some 300 men. Hamza’s men had to retreat empty handed to Medina and Abul Hakam proceeded onwards to Mecca. This was the first confrontation started by Muhammad, which was aborted because of shortage of men and bad planning. The god who told Muhammad to raid and plunder the caravans, did not tell him how to do it. And the Prophet had to learn it by trial and error just like any greenhorn thief.

The next event took place a month later in Jan. A.D. 623. At that time Muhammad sent another party double the strength of the first one, under the command of Obeida, ibn Harith, in pursuit of another caravan protected by Abu Sofian with 200 men. This time the Quraish were surprised while their camels were grazing by a fountain in the valley of Rabigh and some arrows were exchanged but the invaders retreated after realizing that their number is much less than the men in the caravan.

One month later, a third expedition started under the youthful Sa’d, with twenty followers, in the same direction. He was desired to proceed as far as Kharrar, a valley on the road to Mecca, and to lie in wait for a caravan expected to pass that way. Like most of the subsequent marauding parties intended to affect a surprise, they marched by night and lay in concealment during the day. Notwithstanding this precaution, when they reached their destination in the fifth morning, they found that the caravan had passed a day before, and they returned empty-handed to Medina.

These excursions occurred in the winter and spring of the year 623 A.D. On each occasion, Muhammad mounted a white banner on a staff or lance, and presented it to the leader, on his departure. The names of those who carried the standard, as well as the names of the leaders, are carefully recorded in hadithes in these and in all other expeditions of importance.

There were three more failed robbery attempt by the Prophet and his men at Abwa, Bowat and Osheira.

Nakhlah the breakthrough

More than one year had past and despite several attempts and expeditions none of the holy Prophet's robberies were successful. The megalomaniac Messenger of Allah finally realized that he has to start with smaller targets. So when the news reached him of a small merchant caravan going from Mecca to Taif which was guarded by four men, he seized the opportunity and sent Abdallah ibn Jahsh, with seven other immigrants, to hijack that caravan.

The group of bandits went to Nakhla a Valley between that Mecca and Taif known for its date orchards and waited there. In a short time a caravan laden with wine, raisins, and leather, came up. It was guarded by four Qureishits, who, seeing the strangers, were alarmed, and halted. To disarm their apprehensions, one of Abdallah's party shaved his head, in token that they were returning from the lesser pilgrimage; for this was one of the months in which that ceremony was ordinarily performed. The men of the caravan were at once reassured, and turning their camels adrift to pasture, began to prepare food for themselves. Then one of Abdallah’s men advanced; and discharging an arrow, killed a man of the convoy, on the spot. All then rushed upon the caravan, and securing two, the rest of the guards as hostages let them along with the goods stolen to Medina. One man escaped

Upon arriving at Medina, the followers of Muhammad were disappointed for the envoy had violated a long-standing tradition of no hostility during the sacred months. This was embarrassing to the messenger of Allah and he pretended to be angry. He took all the goods confiscated and jailed the men captured and demonstrated his displeasure. But soon the resourceful Prophet took out another verse from Allah out of his sleeve and condoned the crime thus:

> *"They will ask thee concerning the Sacred Months, whether they may war therein. SAY : - Warring therein is grievous; but to obstruct the way of God, and to deny him, and hinder men from the Holy Temple, and expel his people from thence, is more grievous with God. Tempting (to Idolatry) is more grievous than killing. They will not leave off to fight against you until they turn you from your faith, if that were ill their power; but whosoever amongst you shall turn back from his faith and die an Unbeliever, -verily their Works are rendered of no effect in this Life and in the next. These are the Dwellers in Hell, - for ever therein. But they that believe, and they who emigrate for the sake of their faith, and strive earnestly in the way of God, - let them hope in the mercy of God: for God is forgiving and merciful." (Q.2: 217)*

After promulgating this verse, Muhammad gave over the booty to the captors, who, after presenting a fifth of it to Mohammad, divided the remainder among themselves.

Before Abdallah reached Nakhla, two of his men, Sa’d and Otba, lost their camels that wandered in the desert. They went after their camels and missed the action in Nakhla. When Abdallah returned to Medina, these two men had not returned yet. Muhammad feared that they were captured by the Quraish and refused to ransom the captives till he was assured

that no foul play had been used against them: - "if ye have killed my two men," he said, "verily, I will put yours also to death." But, soon after, they showed up, and the Prophet accepted the proffered ransom, - forty ounces of silver for each and released them.

Attacking merchant caravans, fighting during the holy months, deceiving and killing innocent people, stealing the goods unlawfully, taking human hostages, demanding ransom for their release, threatening to kill them, etc. are not acts that one would expect from a messenger of God. What the Prophet did here is criminal. There can be no justification for that whatsoever.

It was only then that it became clear for the Quraish that their opponent respected no rules. It is interesting to note that the first blood spelt between the Muslims and the non-believers was spelt by a Muslim. In no time Muslims were victimized. They were always victimizers, the aggressors and provokers.

Ibn Hisham confirmed, "This was, the first booty that the Mussulmans obtained; the first captives they seized; the first life they took."

The Prophet is said to have designated Abdallah, the head of the bandits of Nakhah, with the distinction of *Amir al Mominin*, "Commander of the Faithful" an appellation that was assumed in after days by the Caliphs.

This attack showed that the Prophet and his followers would respect neither life nor the universally honored sacred months. But still the Quraish did not retaliate. Though some of the Muslims were still in Mecca, the Quraish attempted no cruelties or reprisals against them. This is in contrast with the Prophet's way of punishing some for the faults of others. When his men captured the guards of the Caravan in Nakhlah, he was ready to kill them just by assuming that his other lost followers were captured and killed by the Meccans. Even if that were true, how could a messenger of God put to death innocent people for the sins of others? However, the most horrendous act of the Prophet's injustice is his massacre of all the men of Bani Quraiza in retaliation of one of them killing a Muslim who in turn had killed a Jew.

After the successful foray in Nakhlah, the Prophet increased his profitable marauding activities and became an expert in art of plundering and warfare. More caravans were attacked and more booty filled the coffins of the Prophet and enriched his followers. It was then that the messenger of Allah started to reveal verses encouraging fighting and killing. Like the following:

> *"Bear good tidings unto the Righteous. Truly the Lord will keep back the Enemy from those who believe, for God loveth not the perfidious Unbeliever. Permission is granted unto those who take up arms for that they have been injuriously entreated; and verily the Lord is Mighty for the assistance of those who have been driven from their homes without just cause, - for no other reason than that they said, God is our Lord. And truly if it were not that God holdeth back mankind, one part of them by means of another part (Q.22: 41)*

Notice how the holy Prophet is twisting the facts to rouse his followers into killing frenzy. As we saw Muslims were not “injuriously treated” and they were not driven from their homes. The Quraish did not persecute them for their belief in God. These inflammatory verses were lies. But he wanted to incite them to enlist in his army and help him realize his dream of conquering the Arabia and subduing the Ajam.

The treaty that was signed in Medina obliged the inhabitants of that town to protect Mohammad if he was attacked by the Meccans, but it did not require them to take part in offensive wars, plunder and enrich the prophet with spoils of war. But Muhammad needed their participation in his expeditions. The solution was found, as usual, in a revelation.

> *"War is ordained for you, even though it be irksome unto you. Perchance ye dislike that which is good for you, and love that which is evil for you. But God knoweth, and ye know not."*

At this point we have to ask ourselves what makes a man a messenger of God if not his deeds and good conduct? In what ways the Prophet excelled the common thieves, the gangsters, the thugs, the hooligans, the hoodlums and the criminals?

The ultimate question

Dear Ayatollah, in your letter you seemed to approve of what the Prophet did because the ends justified the means. You were not concerned at all that what he did was unethical, dishonest and ruthless because he was a messenger of God and because of that whatever he did, even though it was blatantly unjust was right.

The point is not who was Muhammad and what he did? Muhammad is dead and what he did is history. The point is who are WE? What can be said of a society that holds a thug, a common assassin, and a marauding thief as her spiritual leader? What can be said about us, our values and morals, when we hale a man like Muhammad as our teacher? How can we aspire to become a spiritual society when our beloved Prophet was a murderer? How can we ever establish humanistic values of tolerance, equality, justice and love when our spiritual leader had none of them? These are the questions that our nation must answer in this crucial moment of her existence. This is the first time after 1400 years of living under terror and being blindfolded that we have the chance to see for our selves, question and face the truth.

We are what we think and we think in accordance to what we believe. Can we ever become a peaceful, loving, advanced and civilized nation when we believe in a man that was a mass murderer, a liar, a pedophile, a thief, an assassin, a rapist, a lustful womanizer, a hateful warrior, and a prowling gangster? Can we ever have peace when our Prophet taught us nothing but war? Can we ever tolerate each other and celebrate our differences when the man whom we want to emulate in everything had nothing but scorn for those who were different from him? Can we ever respect the women of our society when our spiritual guide, whom we call infallible, called them deficient in intelligence, crooked ribs, calamities and domains of Satan? Can we ever replace the hate that is burning in our hearts for the

minorities among us when our messenger said that they are najis, should be killed, or subdued, humiliated and pay Jazyah? Can we ever love each other when our Prophet told us to hate? Isn't it true that the leaders should be ahead of his followers? How can we go forward, when our leader was so backward?

To know Islam, and the truth about it is ultimately to know who we are, why our history evolved the way it did and how we got here? The physicians know that once the cause of a disease is discovered, the cure is around the corner. It is time that we as a society pay attention to the cause of our malaise. Perhaps we can find our remedy around the corner.